

Compare the 1911  
revolution and the  
may fourth movement  
in terms of their  
nature ...

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



The 1911 Revolution was an uprising initiated by the revolutionaries to overthrow the Qing Court, while the May Fourth Movement was anti-Japanese movement. In terms of their nature, they are quite similar; both of them are nationalistic, democratic, anti-government and anti-traditional. And in terms of their nature, both of them had made changes. They can be categorized into different aspects like politically, economically and intellectually. Firstly, the 1911 Revolution and the May Fourth Movement are nationalistic in nature, even though their emphases are not the same.

The 1911 Revolution was stressing on “ Han Nationalism” while the latter stressed on anti-imperialism. For the 1911 Revolution, it emphasized on unifying the Hans and to expel the Manchus. It was because in the 19th century, the Qing Court showed its incapability in resisting foreign invasion. The Qing Court lost in every battle with foreigners, like the two Anglo-Chinese Wars, the Sino-Japanese War, etc. The Qing Court even signed numerous of unequal treaties with them. All these failure had intensified the discontentment of the Hans towards the alien rule.

In the late 19th century, unsuccessful attempt, the Late Qing Reform had again disappointed the Hans, thus, doomed the outbreak of this anti-Qing revolution. For the May Fourth Movement, it was a nationalistic movement against imperialism. It was a movement involving students, teachers, workers and merchants. They were responding to the turning down of requests concerning the termination of equal treaties and the return of Shandong in the Paris Peace Conference. In the early 20th century, there

was still foreign aggression, such as the Twenty-One Demands presented by Japan.

In short, they wanted to stop foreign invasion in China, therefore, initiated such anti-imperialism movement. Secondly, both of them are democratic. For the 1911 Revolution, revolutionaries did not only want to overthrow the autocratic Manchus, but also setting up a republic. Dr. Sun, the leader of the 1911 Revolution, suggested the Three People Principle as the ideology behind, emphasizing on Democracy, Nationalism and Socialism. He suggested referendum and election, and also dividing the power of the government into five branches.

These are the democratic concessions that the 1911 Revolution aimed to achieve. The May Fourth Movement was also democratic. Intellectuals suggested ideologies like democracy and science to be the new value of modern China. They spread the ideas of democracy and liberalism through their publications. Thirdly, both of them are anti-government. For the 1911 Revolution, it is an anti-government uprising initiated by a group of people who were not supporting the Qing government. They aimed at overthrowing the government and to replace it with a new one.

For the May Fourth Movement, it is also anti-government in nature. It was because at that time, China was in a state of chaos without proper administration of the central government, the Beiyang government. Instead, numerous warlords took over different regions, and administrated violently by force. People also found the government unable to resist foreign

aggression in the signing of the Twenty-One Demands. Moreover, the Beiyang government responded by repression at the beginning stage of the movement. It aroused much participation from different classes against the government.

Thirdly, both the 1911 Revolution and the May Fourth Movement are anti-traditional. For example, the 1911 Revolution was suggesting a republic to be set up and abolish the monarchical system that had been running for ages. Dr. Sun derived these ideas from his understanding of the Western countries and the western learning that he received. Overall, it was against the old traditional system. Similarly, the May Fourth Movement also attacked on traditional values and system. Intellectuals proposed the use of plain language instead of traditional writing.

They had slogan like “ down with the old and up with the new”. They criticized the traditional value, Confucianism, to be responsible for the backwardness of China. However, there are still some differences between the two in terms of their nature. First of all, the 1911 Revolution was not really anti-imperialism. It put little emphasis on expelling foreign invasion. They only aimed at overthrowing the Qing Court. Throughout the whole revolution, revolutionaries did not do anything against imperialism; they only ensured the neutrality of the foreigners during the revolution.

While in the May Fourth Movement, people took real action by initiating demonstration in order to urge the government to negotiate and take back Shandong. Secondly, the 1911 Revolution is not anti-warlordism. Basically, it

was a pretty new problem in the early 20th century, after the death of Yuan Shikai. Warlord governments were autocratic and violent. Such warlordism had also led to numerous wars that threaten people's lives. It would be a unique nature for the May Fourth Movement. For the political aspect, the 1911 Revolution had a much greater impact. The 1911 Revolution had brought about a real achievement.

A remarkable change took place after the 1911 Revolution. The form of government changes from a monarchy to a republic. For the May Fourth Movement, it did not achieve anything real. However, both of them made contribution in popularizing political ideologies. Both movements had aroused the attention of Chinese people, and raised their political consciousness. The 1911 Revolution had first introduced the Three People Principle to the Chinese intellectuals, while later, the intellectuals in the May Fourth Movement had further spread these ideas through their publications.

And in fact, they inspired a few mass movements afterwards. The introduction of new ideas also includes socialism, which in later, some socialist intellectuals like Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao would lead to more changes. For the economical side, the May Fourth Movement had a greater influence. As what I have mentioned, the May Fourth Movement was an anti-imperialism movement, especially against the Japanese. At that time, the Chinese despised the Japanese products.

As they stressed on national salvation, they preferred buying Chinese products so as to strengthen the economy of China. For the 1911 Revolution,

it brought no significant changes to the economy. And lastly, the May Fourth Movement had brought about very unique impact on the intellectual side. It had made very critical examination over Confucianism. Traditional values were abandoned and were replaced by western ideas. These western ideas include science and democracy. Some minor changes, like the introduction of plain language also took place.